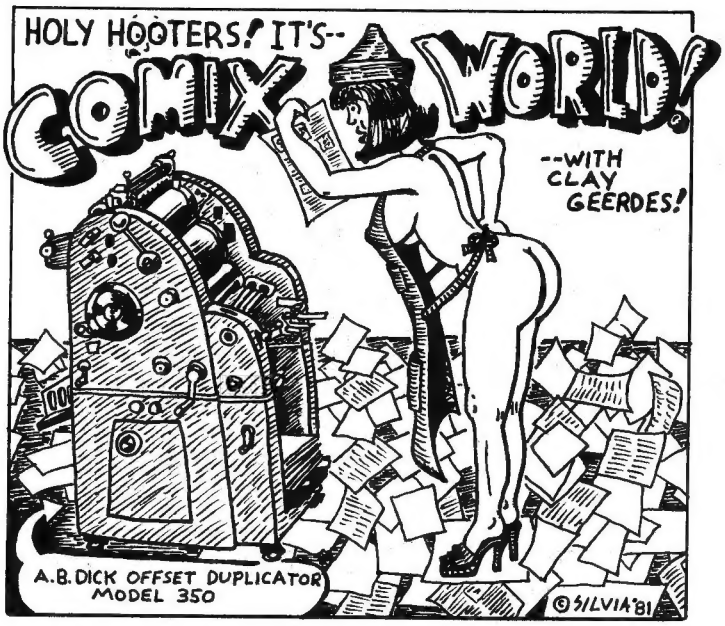

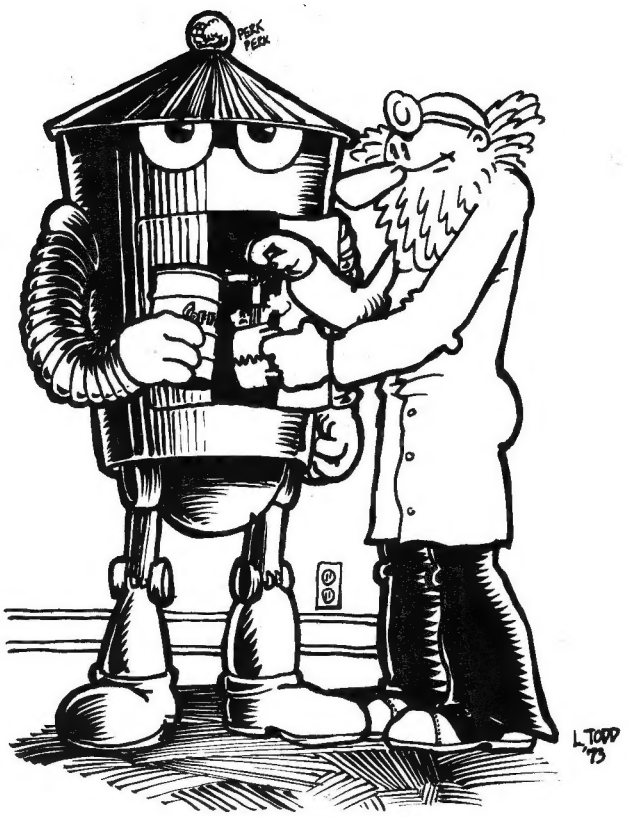

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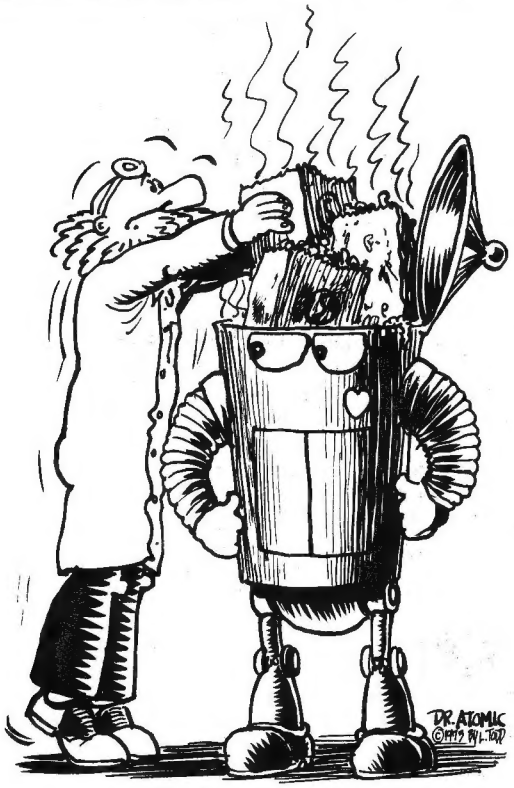
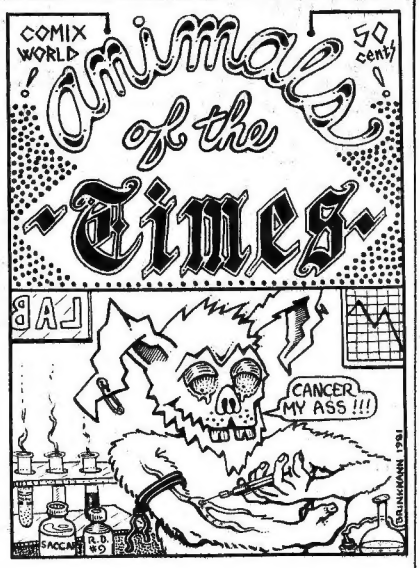
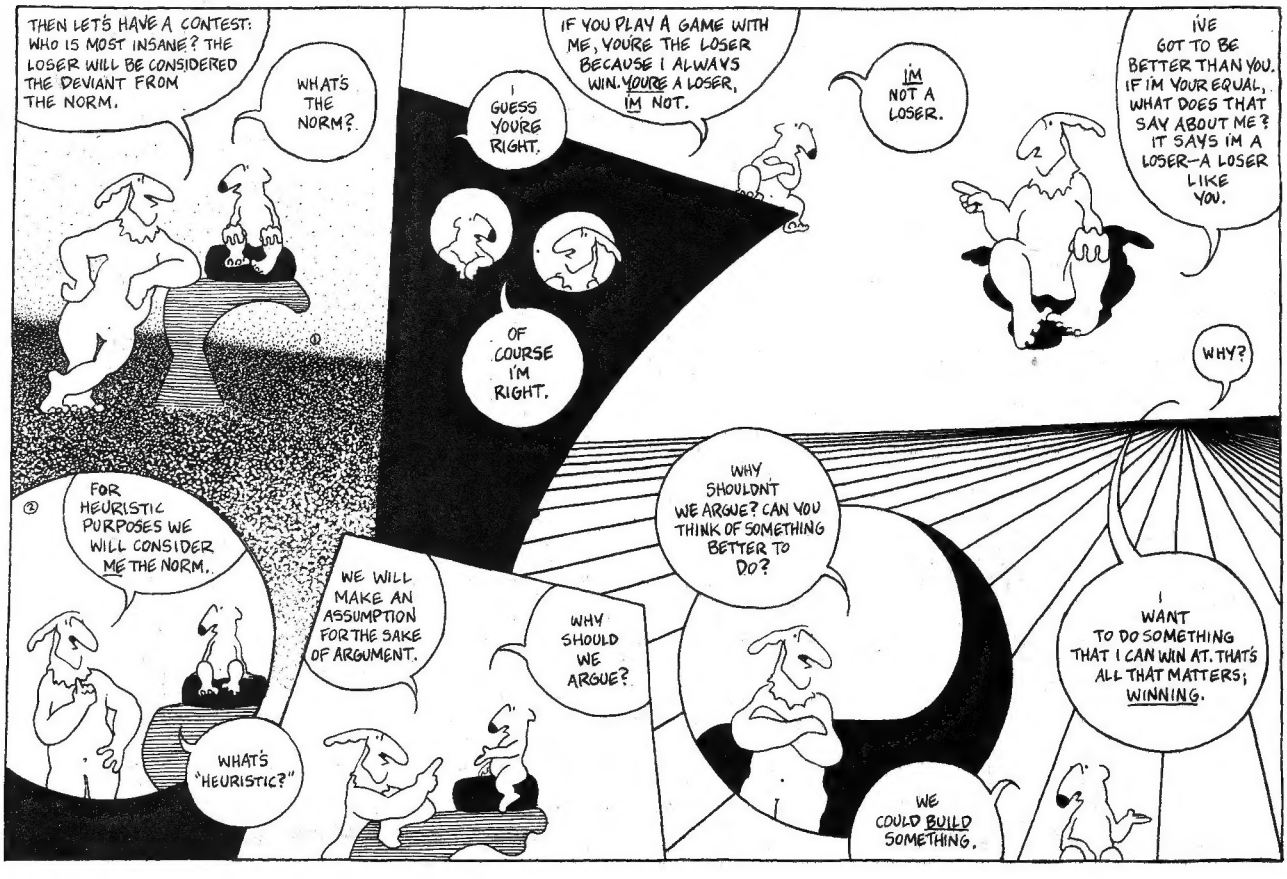
Just when I was beginning to think there were no good old fashioned underground comix coming out any more, I got the new issue of DR. ATOMIC. The kindly old cannibinologist goes to Peru in this Barksian tale, "Chariots of the Sun." Back in the early seventies when I was going around interviewing all the ug cartoonists for that series I wrote for the L. A. FREE PRESS, I got in touch with Larry Todd and we met at Mama's in North Beach. Now I just have to confess that it is hard for me to interview anyone because I am such a blabbermouth, but in Larry Todd I met my match. Here was an educated (Syracuse, New York, where he roomed with Vaughn Bode in the late sixties) cartoonist, well versed in the history of the comics, one who could go on for hours about his own



work and the influences on it. I mean Todd had big ideas for his work from the very beginning. He rapped entire graphic novels, long stories of Dr. Atomic and Billy Kropotkin and Robot and he had such a broad comprehensive understanding of science--well, that interview was the beginning of a long friendship, one in which Todd and I were to meet at parties and Cons to have those long insane conversations that become stranger as the evening progresses--I'll never forget that Bay Con at the Claremont Hotel in Berkeley in 1975 when Todd gave me a hit from one of his joints and put me away for the evening. The most potent hybrid weed that ever came my way (grown no doubt in accordance with the careful horticulture spelled out in DR. ATOMIC #4). Todd had become involved with a Berkeley belly dance troupe and I would see him at subsequent cons in those exotic costumes. When I hustled the University of California into offering a seminar on THE CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN COMIC BOOK one summer, Larry came and inked a page for the students (a gang of 76 straight folks, most of whom were elementary and high school teachers in their real lives).

I wanted people to get a taste of reality in that class and we got to a lot of them. When they left after that weekend, they no longer thought of comics as limited to that sorry stuff that fills most of the Sunday pages. Well, what is Larry Todd like? My readers are always asking what someone is <u>really</u> like. Well, they're really like their comix, but that isn't what they want to know. They want some personal details, some little thing that will humanize the artist for them. Who can ever satisfy such a question? Todd is <u>tall</u>. He's not as tall as Charlie Dallas who has to be the tallest ug cartoonist who ever hit the West Coast, but he's taller than Crumb and Shelton and Kinney. He's open to people in a way many artists are not. He was helpful and cooperative back in 1973 when Bud Plant, John Barrett, Bob Beerbohm, myself and others were organizing the first underground con in Berkeley. Larry did the back cover that program book and contributed the two Doc Atomic drawings reprinted here to the book. Todd is social (or he was at the time--from his latest letter I get the feeling he is withdrawing into a more private place for a time). He is able to talk about his work and enjoys it. Many ug artists are not social. They don't like to have strangers recognize them and ask them about their work. I've been told a number of times over the years, "It's all in the art. Let 'em read the book." Well, fine. But there is the art and the person. Some of them, when you get down to it, were ashamed of their work for undergrounds. They were defensive all the time. It bothered them that their art was refused exhibition in galleries and shows at cons and it bothered them when it was on exhibit in some public place. There was an ambivalence there which hasn't been openly discussed. The pose at the time was anti-establishment, but there were artists who were opposed to the established social order because they disagreed with it, and those who were opposed because they had tried to get in and couldn't. Ironically, many of the themes which were not acceptable to Warren in the late sixties are now standard in books like 1994. Larry Todd only conforms to his own system of values. One would wonder why an anti-dope character like ZIPPY, for instance, appears in HIGH TIMES and DR. ATOMIC doesn't. Clearly, Doc Atomic is more in phase with the HIGH TIMES reader than Zippy, the darling of the puke-rock cult. Larry Todd lives in the country now, away from the schisms, cliques, and squabbles. He's finishing IT'S A DOG'S LIFE and working on a newly created character.*** Says Larry Todd: "The minis are an important evolution of the comix movement. They have clearly taken over the spirit of the underground." The latest from COMIX WORLD are Tom Brinkman's AMIMALS OF THE TIMES and Dale Oliver's LOW GRADE 2 and 3 (all three for a buck if you order before June 15).* Larry Gonick's CARTOON HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE #6 just out from Rip Off Press. Press kit has pix of Gilbert Shelton who is travelling in Europe--no bio on Gonick?* Schneider's MAGGOT-ZINE is finally out. over 100 pages. Information next issue.* BAR WARS 2 mini out from Jack D. Zastre. 50¢/stamp, POB 2306, Wpg, Man., Canada R3C 4A6. Get the jam, HOLEY SCRIPT, for another 50¢ same place.* COMIX WORLD will be at Bay Con, USF, June 7, and at CREATION CON, June20-21, San Francisco Hyatt-Regency.




THEN LET'S HAVE A CONTEST: WHO IS MOST INSANE? THE LOSER WILL BE CONSIDERED THE DEVIANT FROM THE NORM.
WHAT'S THE NORM?
FOR HEURISTIC PURPOSES WE WILL CONSIDER ME THE NORM.
WHAT'S "HEURISTIC?"
WE WILL MAKE AN ASSUMPTION FOR THE SAKE OF ARGUMENT.
WHY SHOULD WE ARGUE?
IF YOU PLAY A GAME WITH ME, YOURE THE LOSER BECAUSE I ALWAYS WIN. YOURE A LOSER, IM NOT.
I GUESS YOURE RIGHT.
OF COURSE I'M RIGHT.
WHY SHOULDN'T WE ARGUE? CAN YOU THINK OF SOMETHING BETTER TO DO?
WE COULD BUILD SOMETHING.
IM NOT A LOSER.
IVE GOT TO BE BETTER THAN YOU. IF IM YOUR EQUAL, WHAT DOES THAT SAY ABOUT ME? IT SAYS IM A LOSER—A LOSER LIKE YOU.
WHY?
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING THAT I CAN WIN AT. THAT'S ALL THAT MATTERS; WINNING.
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